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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony
Virginia Longo, Community Educator
Brain Injury Association of Connecticut

Good evening Chairpersons Geragosian, Harp and Members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Virginia Longo and I am the Community Educator for the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut.

As community educator I travel throughout the state to educate professionals on both how the brain works and how it is affected by injury. The majority of people know very little about brain injury which in turn has created an enormous deficit in care for survivors and in the prevention of brain injury.

On a daily basis I receive phone calls from social workers, correctional officers, athletic trainers, hospital staff and many other agency and school personnel throughout the state asking for workshops or information to gain a better understanding of brain injury. Brain injury is incredibly complex. It is my job to tailor each presentation I give to the target audience - whether it is a kindergarten class in Hartford, a staff of social workers at a Community Action Agency, or inmates with brain injuries at a correctional facility.

Despite being more prevalent than spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, HIV/AIDS and breast cancer combined, traumatic brain injury is often referred to as "the silent epidemic." A TBI is the only injury that can change the very essence of who a person is. It can affect thinking, physical and social functioning. A once self sufficient successful adult may have trouble simply remembering to eat or how to tie the laces on their shoes. Working with TBI survivors can be very challenging, especially if one is unaware of the difficulties and challenges a survivor faces.

It is vital that people who work with brain injury survivors understand how to properly treat and communicate with them. Without proper education, effective treatment is extremely difficult.

In addition to working with professionals we also offer workshops for schools and communities. Sports concussions are on the rise and educating school officials, coaches and athletes is a part of our educational outreach initiative that enables our Connecticut athletes to stay safe.

Lastly, we also provide workshops for families and brain injury survivors. We receive so many calls from families that know next to nothing about brain injury and have difficulty understanding what has happened to them and where to turn. Through our efforts, we are able to empower families and survivors to educate themselves and to better understand what their needs are.

The only cure for brain injury is prevention. Without your help we could no longer continue with our prevention and educational efforts. Your continued support will lead to better care, better education and less brain injuries.